



**U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement**

February 24, 2004

# News Release

## **HUSBAND AND WIFE PLEAD GUILTY IN FRAUD SCAM**

TAMPA — United States Attorney Paul I. Perez today announced Sameeh Taha Hammoudeh, 45, and Nadia Ibrahim Hammoudeh, 42, both residents of Tampa, Florida, pleaded guilty Tuesday to charges of conspiracy to defraud the Internal Revenue Service and commit offenses against the United States, making false statements to Immigration and Naturalization Service and filing a false tax return in 1998 with the Internal.

A federal grand jury in Tampa, Florida returned a multi-count indictment in August 2004 against Sameeh and Nadia Hammoudeh. The indictment charged the defendants with committing various crimes including conspiracy, tax fraud, immigration fraud and mail and wire fraud. According to the plea agreement, the defendants both were employed by the Islamic Academy of Florida, from September 1994 through April 2000, without authorization from the Immigration and Naturalization Service and in violation of their United States visas.

Among other things, the defendants caused to be filed with the Immigration Naturalization Service documents that contained numerous false statements, in order to receive immigration benefits for themselves or their children. The defendants also failed to report the income that they received for their work at the Islamic Academy of Florida to the Internal Revenue Service and filed tax returns that substantially underreported their income. The defendants further filed a loan application and other documents with Washtenaw Mortgage Company that contained false statements regarding their citizenship and the source of their down payment, in order to obtain a home mortgage loan to purchase a house in Tampa.

Sameeh Hammoudeh pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy, one count of making a false statement to the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and one count of filing a false tax return. These charges carry a maximum sentence of 13 years' imprisonment, a fine of up to \$ 600,000.00 and a term of supervised release of up to three years.

Nadia Hammoudeh pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy, one count of making a false statement in an Immigration application, and one count of filing a false tax return. These charges carry a maximum sentence of 18 years' imprisonment, a fine of up to \$600,000.00, and term of supervised release up to three years.

Neither of the defendants is a United States citizen or lawful permanent resident. As a condition of the plea agreements, the defendants agreed to stipulate to entry of an order of removal.

The case was investigated by special agents of the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Orlando Division, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Tampa, and the Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation, Tampa.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Terry Zitek and Trial Attorney Alexis Collins of the Department of Justice.

# ICE #

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.*